Harcarse Hill, Berwickshire. 13 April 1840

Dear & Beloved Brethren in J. Christ

As a member of the Ed, Un, Miss, Assoⁿ but not by their order do I write unto you. Having received your very excellent letter, which came to hand 24 Febʸ that I might prepare answer thereto agt. the commencement of next session of college feeling a strong attachment to our Transatlantic Brethren & seeing it will be some months before the answer from the Assoⁿ is sent off, I cannot resist the opportunity afforded me by the emigration of an acquaintance to the West, of sending you these few lines. Besides, in our Assⁿ there are united individuals of very diffᵗ opinions on the great questions which now agitate the church. On this account you will hereby receive information on these topics not to be obtained by the letter of the association.

Your letter, Dear Brethren, very much interests us. The struggles & the obtained deliverance of your Church of which we previously knew something fully engage our sympathies. And while we send up a tribute of praise & thanksgiving for the signal triumphs of truth & sound principle vouchsafed to you, the following relation will manifest to you how much we as a church need a return of your sympathy & an interest in your daily supplications at the throne of Grace. Indeed, Dear Brethren our sympathy for you is wrought in us by sad & present experience of similar trials.

During the last 40 years a very general, tho' silent & gradual reformation has been going on in our Church. Formerly she was dead to every duty which as a Xian Church she was bound to perform. There is now a more hopeful state of things. The nature of pulpit addresses is evidently different, instead of frozen moral essays, the life giving Gospel is resuming its place. The discipline of the church is being restored. As a consequence of this the influence of the Spirit is felt in many saving conversions and along with this we are again fast returning to the primitive model of strict Presbⁿ Govt. While the Lord has been thus gradually restoring our church & fitting her for great usefulness; He has during the past year in a wonderful manner acknowledged her as his own. Many parishes have been visited by a rich outpouring of the Spirit & many souls are now rejoicing in the possession of a present salvation. The work is spreading & promises erelong to be a general blessing. But the attempts to restore sound presbyterianism tho' they will in the end assuredly be crowned with success, are destined to meet much & very determined opposition.

Six years ago the Genl. Assemᵞ passed a law which empowered the members of a vacant congregation to veto an unacceptable Presentee. This law is based on, and has the sanction long ago given by the State to our Confession of Faith, tho' the civil sanction has not been granted to this renovated measure, the church in following out the decrees of the Supreme Ecclesiastical Court has been brought into collision with the civil courts. Among our many deeply interesting cases we shall shortly relate to you what has transpired since the meeting of Genˡ Assemᵞ.

The Presbytery of Strathbogie a few months ago agreed by a majority of 7 to 4, to take upon trials a Mr Edwards presented to the Parish of Marnoch, altho' his call had but one solitary signature — and this the name of the worthy publican who regularly provides the Presbytery dinner. The minority appealed to the Commission of Assembly which met in December, when the majority were suspended from all ministerial duty until the meeting of Assembly in May upon pain of deposition

This sentence was disregarded by the seven who obtaining an interdict from the Court of Session prohibiting any minister who might be sent by the Church, from preaching in the church, churchyard or schoolhouse of their Parishes, continued to perform their wonted ministerial functions. — Notwithstanding the ministers who were sent obtained very large audiences, altho' frequently the places of meeting were of a novel description,

Shortly after seeing the tide of public feeling in their own parishes drawn after the "New Lights" as they denominated them, the worthy seven sought & obtained a second interdict — forbidding on pain of fine & imprisonment any minister sent by the Church from preaching within the bounds of the parishes of the seven suspended ministers, Nay so far did their blind zeal carry them, that they even served the edict upon one still in Edinr. whom the suspected to be going North, But, Blessed be God, we have many martyr spirited men — men in whose veins flows the blood of of our Dear Devoted Forefathers, — men who would most cheerfully & unwaveringly, pass thro' the fire to the enjoyment of an unfading crown, Such, disregarding the interdict, went & preached the Gospel to a people perishing for lack of the food that endureth to eternal life, Yea the princes in Israel went, those who are the leaders in the struggle went, a revival took place, the Spirit has come down; & it is now to the long famished people of the North as life from the dead, Thus the matter at present stands, The church party are doing their endeavours by numerous non-intrusion meetings to interest the whole of Scotland, Numerously signed petitions from all quarters are being sent to the Supreme Civil courts, who are not yet prepared to bring in any measure either for or agt. the Church,

Every eye is turned to the state & the Heaven, The struggle is a severe one, yet we are not cast down, Unfavorable as we have above related has given us to believe that the cause is His own, The prospect immediately before us appears very dark, We look to heaven & that not without strong hope, Yet lest our faith fail in the hour of trial we commend our church to you for the interest in your prayers,

Never since the era of the Reformation have we seen such an undeniable manifestation of the glorious working of the Sovereign Spirit among men as among us during the bygone months. Truly it has been wonderful, Like the move of skillful chessplayer, a presiding Providence has with infinite wisdom had ordered every measure whether prosperous or adverse, overruling all for one great end — the weaning of the church from her carnal security & all creature confidence, that all her affections might be given to her rightful Head, & her endeavours ~~for the~~ be all directed to the extension of his kingdom & the glory of his name, The church is now in a great trial, further steps must be taken, We know not what it may be, but we are well assured that the result will be very blessed. —

To turn to another duty, one specially binding on every Christian Church, the evangelization of the heathen, we observe that under the able advocacy of our beloved Dr. Duff of the Calcutta station the cause of missions has obtained a warm & increasing interest in the hearts & the prayers of many in our land. The obligations of supporting missionaries to the heathen is more powerfully & more generally felt, Still the great body of our peoples are far from taking the lively interest in missions it is so desirable to see realized, Yea we speak the truth when we say that there are whole districts & these unhappily by no means few, where under ungodly ministers a total ignorance reigns, both of their duty to the heathen world & of the actual state of missions. But knowing that a Christianised people is always Missionary in its spirit, & having the well grounded hope that at no distant period Scotland will be thoroughly Christianised, we rejoice in the prospect of a heart & universal response being given to the urgent calls of the heathen. —

In our Assocn during the past year the missionary spirit has obtained for itself a great addition of strength & influence. In less than 3 years 6 have gone out from among us to the foreign service. And our Assocn having obtained funds for sending out another, about 3 weeks ago made choice of our President, as their Missionary to India, who has accepted the offer. There are we believe, not a few more among us who even now have taken their resolution of spending a devoted life among the longneglected heathen. But tho' this is the reigning spirit in our Assn a much inferior spirit actuates many who attend our Halls. But even there there has been of late a universal exaltation both of character & piety. A few now & then come over to our meetings, of some of whom we can confidently affirm that they have been born again, from a life of darkness & uncertainty, to the enjoyment of Gospel light & peace. Some of the most talented & able young men among us are among this interesting number —

A great & increasing interest is excited in our church for the Jews. Last year a deputation of 4 ministers was sent out to Palestine by the Gen Assembly to enquire into the state of the Hebrew people there & on the continent generally & to report. And one if not two missionaries will [illegible] sent out after the next meeting of Assembly. In the Providence of God there is a great opening for the preaching of the gospel to his beloved people. Indications have been made in many quarters of a readiness to hear the word & in some as Constantinople to come over to the faith of Christ,

For information on the Christian & Evangelistic undertakings of our church see the "Home & Foreign Missionary Record," published monthly at Edinr at 4pence a number when sent by post, & for information on the state of our church generally see "The Witness" newspaper, published at Edinr two numbers weekly, 4½ pence per number or £2 Sterling per annum

We obtain information regarding the Presbyterian Church of America from the Andover Bib. Repository, which we are sorry to find from the period that Dr Robinson ceased to be editor has become the vehicle of many dangerous errors. [illegible] these things we cannot but rejoice that your Church by the grace of God [illegible] to have taken so disinterested a step, as by a single act so much to reduce her own Great Strength — & that she has been brought to see that true effective power in any church is the infallible consequent only of a sound faith.

Pray for us, for our Assn & for our church, Dear Brethren, but do not look on this as our Association's answer to your Letter.

And now may the God of Peace keep you & bless you & make you a blessing is the prayer of your very affectionate brother in the Lord Jesus

Peter Edgar.

Mr. Saml. H. Willard
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